When Port Hudson Fell the Confederacy Was Cut in Twain

Long Siege, Marked by Pestilence and Many Casualties, Ended Soon After Fall of Vicksburg, with the Surrender of the Fortress and 6,340 Men—Mississippi, from Source to Mouth, Was Once Again a Federal River.

ON JULY 16, 1863, a crowd of curious persons stood on the wharf at New Orleans. They were looking at one of the picturesque steamers of the Mississippi River, which was splashing down stream. Approaching a point opposite the throng, it turned its nose inshore. As it drew near to the wharf the word Imperial could be read upon its name board. With great interest the crowd watched the operation of putting a flat Mississippi River boat in touch with the bank. In a few minutes negro stevedores were running back and forth, carrying ashore the freight which had been taken aboard up the river.

The landing of a steamboat at New Orleans was not a novelty to the people of the city. They had not gathered simply to see a steamer discharge a cargo. It was the arrival of the vessel itself which was the notable event, for it was the first commercial packet within two years to come through directly from St. Louis. Its advent marked the restoration of the course of the Father of Waters to Federal control and the freedom of movement of commerce throughout the entire navigable length. No more should the muddy waters of the river be tinged with the blood of a fratricidal war. The thundering of the multitude of guns from its bluff was over. Following the surrender of Vicksburg to General Grant on July 4, and the inevitable fall of Port Hudson, the "second Gibraltar" of the Mississippi, two hundred miles to the southward, on July 9, peace once more brooded over its wayward waters, and the Confederacy was cut into two parts by the Federals' winning of the great river.

After Vicksburg Port Hudson was the last Confederate post on the river blocking the movement of commerce. The siege of the latter was carried on simultaneously with that of the greater fortress further north, and the fall of one served to hasten the fall of the other. The story of Port Hudson, like that of Vicksburg, begins far back in the fall of the previous year. In the autumn of 1862 General Nathaniel P. Banks was dispatched from New York to New Orleans with upward of twenty thousand troops. His orders were to supplement this force with such men as he should find in Louisiana, and work in harmony with General Grant in opening up the river. This purpose accomplished, he was to take a position in the Red River country which should serve to protect Louisiana and Arkansas and at the same time serve as a base for further operations in Texas. The Lone Star State was occupying much of the thought of the national government, owing to the political conditions existing in Mexico.

It was in the middle of December when General Banks and his army sailed up the river to New Orleans. Right promptly he began active operations. Before disembarking any of his men, ten thousand of them were sent further on to occupy Baton Rouge, as it was considered that Port Hudson was too strong for the force then at command. With General Banks was General Andrew J. Hamilton, who had been selected to be military governor of Texas. Surrounded by a group of rather low grade local politicians, who were anxious for greater control over Texas than they then had, General Banks was persuaded to send an expedition to Galveston. It consisted of gunboats and transports with three companies of the 42d Massachusetts and Holcomb's 2d Vermont Battery. In the fleet was the Harriet Lane, in command of a gallant New York naval officer, J. M. Wainwright by name.

This expedition reached Galveston the day before Christmas. A month earlier, Major General J. B. Magruder, the Confederate general, who had so successfully bluffed General McClellan at Yorktown and in the neighborhood of Savage's Station in the suburbs of Richmond in the course of the Peninsular campaign, had been placed in command of the district of Texas. The little company of Union soldiers under Colonel Burrell landed, nominally taking possession of the town, but actually confining its physical occupation to a wharf, which was barricaded for protection. General Magruder, the royal bluffer, did not need to bluff this time, for he had at his command two brigades, a regiment of artillery with fourteen heavy guns and fourteen field pieces and two improvised gunboats, the Neptune and the Bayou City. Having completed his plans, General Magruder decided to open the new year with a surprise for the enemy.

It was early in the morning when he made his intentions known by means of an artillery display from his heavy guns. It was still dark when, under the cover of this pyrotechnic exhibition, two storming parties supported by the remainder of the Confederate troops came swinging along, carrying scaling ladders for the purpose of climbing over the barricades on the wharf. The Union soldiers were ready for them. They tried to climb by means of their ladders, which were found to be too short, into the face of a foe that beat them back with savage energy. Nor was the little force on the wharf left to fight alone, for the Harriet Lane and the other vessels of the Union fleet concentrated their fire upon the assaulting forces. As day began to break the Confederate troops were on the point of withdrawing, when the improvised Confederate gunboats appeared and the fortunes of the two opposing forces quickly changed.

The Neptune, claimed by the god whose name she bore, was disabled and sunk by the guns of the Harriet Lane, but her fate was avenged by the men of the Bayou City, who boarded with cutlasses and bayonets the Union vessel and captured her, the gallant commander, Wainwright, being among those killed. The Westfield, of the Union fleet, ran aground and was blown up by her commander. Following the example of the Lane, upon which a white flag was run up, the other vessels also displayed the white ensign. Colonel Burrell, noting the action of the fleet, thereupon surrendered also, and the firing on shore ceased, but as this action had not taken place as soon as had been expected by the officers of some of the Union vessels, they thought the naval truce had been violated and the Clifton, Owasco and Sachem, preceded by the Saxon and Mary A. Boardman, army transports, put to sea. The Confederates lost 26 killed and 117 wounded, while the Union loss was the small one of 5 killed and 15 wounded.

General Banks now began to consider plans for securing possession of Port Hudson, a fortified area situated at a bend at the head of a reach 135 miles up the river from New Orleans, which took its name from a community included within it and now only a postoffice surrounded by the homes of less than five hundred persons. The ancient delta of the Mississippi west of the river is a network of bayous, waterways in the wet season and roadways in the dry. These parallel the course of the Father of Waters, some of them extending as far into the northwest as the Red River, which empties into the Mississippi some miles north of Port Hudson. Among them are La Fourche, the Atchafalaya River, which, passing through a series of broad expanses of water, forms a short cut for a part of the water of the Red River, and the Bayou Teche, a tributary of the Atchafalaya, which joins it near Brashear City. This community was the western terminus of a railroad line from New Orleans. Near by was a fortified post named Fort Bisland. Other places along the Bayou Teche were Franklin, New Iberia and Opelousas. North of the last mentioned on the Red River was Fort de Russy, a strong work near Alexandria. On the Atchafalaya, near its junction with the Red River, was Simmesport.

Of the three possible plans for accomplishing his purpose General Banks gave particular attention to a movement by way of the Atchafalaya into the Red River, which would put his forces on the north side of Port Hudson. As he was preparing to execute this project, word was received that Ellet's rams, the Queen of the West and the Indianola, which had succeeded in passing the Vicksburg batteries, had been captured by the Confederates. With these vessels in the hands of the enemy, General Banks was obliged to think twice before undertaking his plan, for the possession of the steamers gave the Confederates control over the river above Port Hudson until such time as the Union vessels could pass Vicksburg or the lower fortifications.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that communication with General Grant, with whom General Banks was supposed to co-operate, was very poor. Weeks would elapse between the sending and the receipt of a dispatch. For instance, a message sent by General Grant on March 23 did not reach General Banks until April 21. General Banks sent a dispatch on April 10, telling General Grant when he could meet him, but this message reached the addressee only after Grant had won at Port Gibson, and the way was open to Jackson if he took prompt action; which, of course, he did.

While General Grant was preparing his campaign he sent a dispatch to Banks saying that he would send an army corps to Layou Sara, near Port Hudson, by the 25th, to co-operate with him; but when the message was received at New Orleans, April, the month in which it was dated, had passed into May, and General Banks erroneously believed the date when the troops were to reach him was May 25. General Banks replied that he probably would be there by the 25th, and certainly by the 1st—meaning June 1. The difficulties of communicating across this neck of the enemy's territory, only two hundred miles wide, are illustrated by the fact that in one of Banks's letters he said that, under certain circumstances, he would communicate by way of New York, and asked that dispatches be sent him by the same route. The net result was a serious misunderstanding between Halleck, Grant and Banks—Halleck being very anxious that the two generals should work together in the opening of the river.

The capture and possession of the two Union gunboats made Farragut more anxious than ever to get up into the reach beyond Port Hudson with some of his vessels and cut off the Confederate supplies from the Red River country. General Banks was in sympathy with Farragut's desires, and, massing seventeen thousand troops at Baton Rouge, marched to the rear of Port Hudson to draw away from Farragut's move the attention of the enemy, assembled within the works to the number of perhaps twenty thousand, with sixteen thousand ready for duty. It had been Farragut's intention to pass in the gray of the morning of March 15, but it was decided at the last moment to make the attempt before midnight of March 14.

Port Hudson was a formidable work, armed with more than fifty guns. The earthworks inclosed a considerable area, including about two miles of the easterly shore of the Mississippi River and covering the elbow of the river, at the acute bend of which was the village of Port Hudson. Just beyond gunshot to the south was Poplar Island.

While Banks was marching his men to Port Hudson and taking his position Farragut was completing his plans for the passage of the post. Everything being in readiness, the fleet, led by Farragut's flagship, the Hartford, moved up to Poplar Island, where lay the Essex and the "bombers," as the bomb vessels were jocularly styled. The vessels came to anchor and the commanders of the different vessels came aboard for the purpose of a minute rehearsal of the plans. They discussed every possible contingency—every accident that could happen—and the remedy. It was hoped that in the darkness the fleet would be able to pass the long line of batteries unobserved. The hour for the start on the perilous voyage was almost at hand when a river steamer, with flaring lights and whistles sounding, came up the river in search of the flagship, bearing a message from General Banks.

Farragut said nothing, but it was easy to see that he was seriously annoyed at the disturbance the dispatch steamer was making. It jeopardized the success of the project by drawing the enemy's attention to his position and probable purpose in occupying it. As the vessel came within speaking distance the commander of the craft shouted: "General Banks's army is within five miles of the rear of the Port Hudson works." Doubtless, Farragut felt the message hardly important enough to warrant imperilling the success of the joint movement by its delivery.

However, the damage had been done. Soon a shot from one of the lower batteries whistled over the fleet, now moving slowly upstream against the four or five knot current. As if by magic, piles of pine knots placed along the right bank blazed up simultaneously. The whole river was quickly illuminated, and the dark hulls passing between the Confederate batteries and the roaring bonfires, like silhouettes, made excellent targets for the enemy's gunners. Gradually, however, the smudgy pine smoke from the flaming piles, mingling with the smoke from the batteries and the fleet settled down, and the dense darkness of night once more hid the world.

Slowly such of the vessels as had been able to keep on their way forged through the rain of shells, and, in course of time, the Hartford and a small boat, the Albatross, came to anchor beyond the reach of the batteries and opposite a burning heap of pine knots to which a small wooden building was added before the fire-builders gave up their task. The Mississippi did not fare so well. Passing the lower batteries at a good speed she went aground on the spit, opposite Port Hudson. For half an hour she struggled to get free, but, failing, Captain Melancton Smith, her commander, removed the sick, and all hands went ashore, after setting fire to the vessel. Early in the morning she floated off, a giant flaming torch, and drifted down through the remainder of the fleet, which had not succeeded in passing up the river, presenting a magnificent pyrotechnical display when she blew up half an hour later.

General Banks now moved his troops back down the river, an action for which he was criticised, but which was undertaken because his force was not sufficiently large to cope with the troops under General Frank Gardner, occupying the intrenchments around Port Hudson. He took up again his original plan for cutting off Port Hudson from Vicksburg and the North by moving up the Atchafalaya to the Red River. This was not a simple matter of steaming up the river, even if there had been ample facilities for transportation. There was a force of five thousand Confederates under command of the energetic General Taylor hanging on the fringes of the territory seized by the Union forces. With seventeen thousand troops Banks marched on April 11 toward Port Bisland, on the Teche, which was captured. Taylor, however, escaped in a clever manner from between two wings of Banks's army marching toward him from opposite directions with the intention of squeezing him like a lemon, and moved up the Teche.

Banks followed and took Opelousas on April 20. Butte-à-la-Rose was captured on the same day by the gunboats, and the road now being open the Union army marched to Alexandria, on the Red River, beyond Fort de Russy, to push Taylor further out of the way. Having driven the Confederate general to Shreveport, in the northwestern part of the state, on May 14, the whole army proceeded eastward to Simmesport, en route to Port Hudson, where it was expected that General Augur, coming north from Baton Rouge, and a detachment from Grant would be met. The advance of his army crossed the Mississippi on May 23 in the night, and immediately took up position in the rear of Port Hudson. No troops came from Grant, but General Augur's division appeared with an exhilarating promptness. Fortunately for General Banks, a part of the troops at Port Hudson had been dispatched to the succor of Vicksburg, and there were less than seven thousand men to defend the three miles of earthworks. Banks had fourteen thousand.

It was decided to do what Grant did at Vicksburg, although General Banks did not know that he was adopting the same

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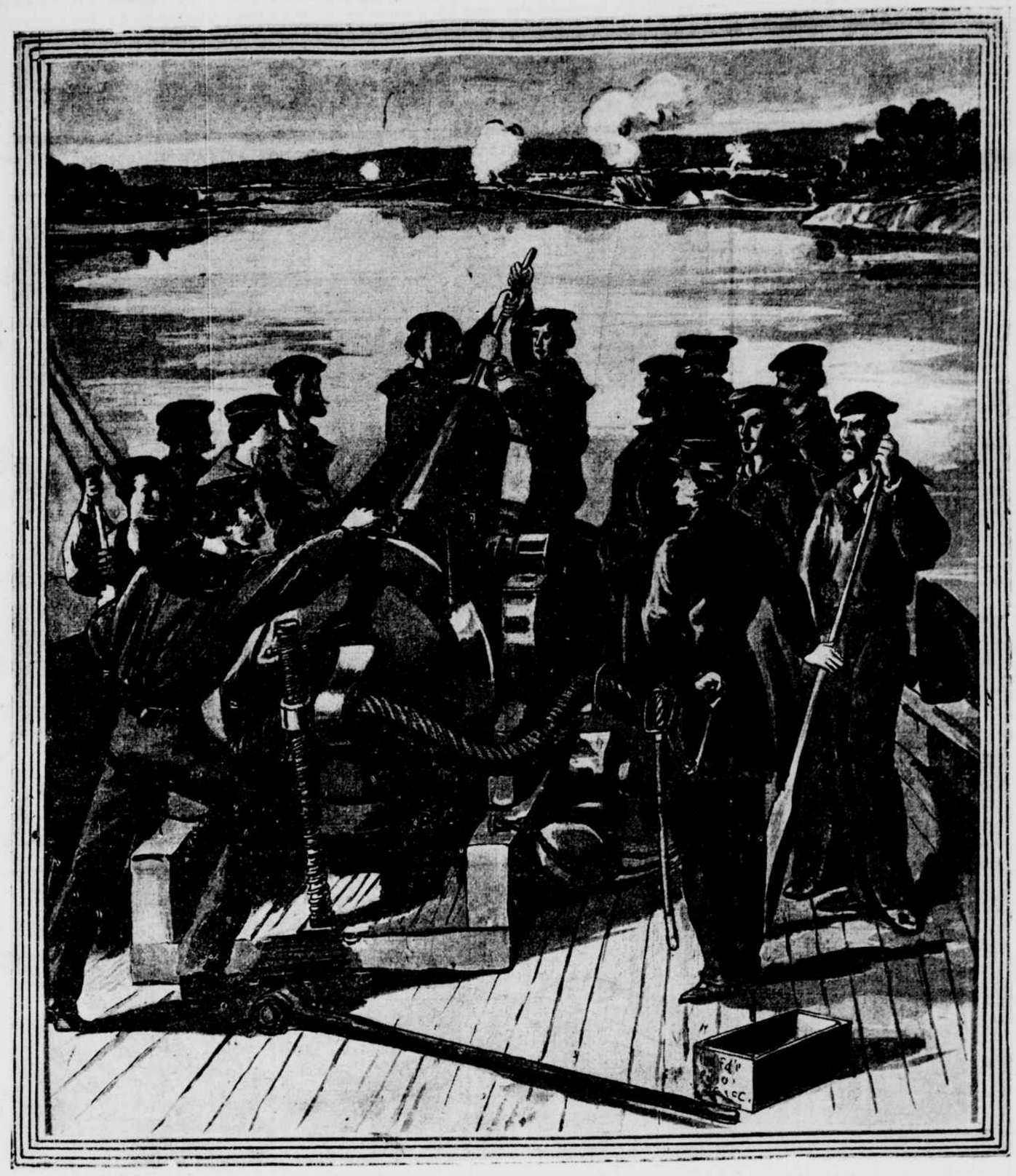

THE BOMBARDMENT OF PORT HUDSON. THE 100-POUND PARROTT GUN OF THE RICHMOND AT WORK.
Reproduced from a contemporary sketch in "Harper's Weekly," by courtesy of the publishers.

Isn't It Perfectly Awful How the Embattled Car Hogs Are Foiled by the Bridge Police?

Think of It! Their Freemen's Rights Curtailed by the New Rule of Places for Dames.

WHERE, I ask you, where is this thing to stop? Are we to have municipal control of Car Seat Hogs?

Well, we shall if Captain Edward J. Bourke, commander in chief and admiral in charge of the well known Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges, has his say-so about the matter. "Cap" Bourke won't venture to predict where the movement will stop—but he will tell you emphatically that he started it, and, furthermore, that he will do everything in his power to keep things moving in this direction.

It was none other than the captain who conceived and executed the much discussed plan of segregating the sexes in the evening rush on three loops of the Brooklyn Bridge surface cars. It's still in the experimental stage, but take this straight from the composer of the plan—if the Bridge Department didn't think a good deal of it they wouldn't have allowed it to run this long. The plan was inaugurated on August 10.

It is a simple little arrangement—a child could understand it, and it takes but three policemen a loop to keep it running. The plan becomes effective at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and is taken off two hours later. It is being tried out on loops 6, 7 and 8, on which tracks the Knickerbocker, Flushing avenue, Graham avenue, Vanderbilt avenue, Bergen street, Court street and Seventh avenue cars come in, circle around and start back to Brooklyn.

Those are the worst three lines on the Manhattan end of the big span. In other days the bridge was the favorite stamping ground for the worst form of the Car Hog. They swarmed over in millions from the tall office buildings, and the minute they struck the pavement of the bridge it seemed that by some sort of Jekyll-Hyde transmigration they threw off the guise of ordinary human beings and showed their atavistic strain by fighting like savages for seats.

The cars stopped at the left of the iron railings fencing off the central thoroughfare to discharge their passengers, and then passed on to stop at the other side of the pickets and deliver themselves into the wild clutches of the waiting mob. The idea of each man, woman and child was to get a seat if possible, but to get on that car dead or alive—and many a white shirtwaist or a creation of Flushing avenue millinery paid the price of the effort.

All this is changed by Captain Bourke's plan. The men are divided from the women and required to stand corraled at the right of the central passageway. The women are crowded over to the left, where the cars stop to let off their passengers, and they scramble aboard while the car is being emptied. When the women are all in the car moves on to the other side. There the men are waiting and they get all the seats that are left—if there are any.

Usually there are a good many seats left for the men. It is a fact that some of the cars even rumble across the bridge with every man and woman aboard contentedly seated and submerged in the day's newspaper dope. Cripples and men with families are allowed to stand on the women's side and get aboard with them. And there are mighty few women who have to cross the bridge standing up on cars of the three segregated lines.

Of course, the plan has produced a world of ly-products in the way of editorial comment, hearty praise and round denunciation. Opinions among the riders naturally differ. Take a woman who has been through the football ordeal under the old plan and she is very enthusiastic, while on the contrary, the man who has an idea that women don't pay any more and are entitled to no more than anybody else, exclaims:

"It's an outrage! A blow aimed at our fundamental personal liberties! The women who work and take the men's jobs ought not to object to being treated as man's equal when it comes to the distribution of these 5 o'clock car seats. They say this is a free country—bah!"

While he is waiting for his car under the watchful eye of the big policeman there is always some man in the crowd that wants to know how the policemen can do it. The legal minded person starts to argue the point.

"By what authority," he demands of the officer, "do you do this thing? I don't believe you can do it. It is plainly unconstitutional."

And sometimes, if the officer has time, he mentions the well known anonymous case of the man in jail who learned through the pressed steel bars of his cell that the sheriff couldn't put him in jail. If he is busy the policeman simply says he is obeying orders, and that if the argumentative one wants to debate the subject he will have to go around to the legal department of the city or to Commissioner Waldo.

As a rule the men don't seem to care a whole lot, for the bridge cops have little trouble keeping them on their side of the loop. One inconvenient thing the plan does is to separate women from their escorts. In many cases a girl will go over on the men's side and take seat chances there rather than leave the man she is with. The policeman don't object to that—only it won't work the other way around.

Where the Bourke system of segregation is least popular is with the officers of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company. The officials complain that it holds up cars and delays traffic, and is unfair to men who have paid just as much fare as the women have.

As to the delay thing Captain Bourke wishes to "call" them on that.

"If they will get the cars to me," he said recently, "I will handle 368 cars during the rush hour, and that is about eight more than their highest mark. I have kept count of the number of cars handled under the new and the old systems. There were eleven cars less under the new plan, and in most cases the discrepancy was due to tie-ups on the main line—that we couldn't help. The street car company is the only place that complaints come from. I have received many letters from women thanking me for putting in a system on the bridge to take the place of the mob rule that formerly was in vogue.

"Some people think that the plan was installed for the sole purpose of getting the women passengers into seats. That isn't it at all. The real motive was to get them out of the terrible crush and scramble when there was no supervision over the boarding of the cars. During the worst crowds it was actually dangerous for women. Why, they might have lost their lives in some of these daily scrimmages. I think the plan is going to stick, and while

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Seat Monopolists Were Making Grand Stand Finish of Glorious Season but for This Check.